

CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY

Sacramento

LIBRARY SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY ACT (LSTA) PROGRAM

CRITERIA FOR TECHNOLOGY GRANTS

The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) is a federal funding source that is available for grants to libraries to encourage electronic resource-sharing or to support technology-based services to persons having difficulty accessing or using a library. For the purpose of the LSTA grant program in California, “library technology grants” are defined as funds awarded to libraries for planning and implementation of projects that rely upon technology to succeed. Funds are available for technologies that will enhance access to library resources, improve library services, or promote resource sharing among libraries.

In preparing technology grant applications it is important for the applicant to define a barrier to service or a service need associated with a target clientele. For local service enhancement projects, the needs assessment process should identify and characterize the target population, identify the service access barrier, and address how the application of technology will improve direct library service to that population. The library should be able to identify quantitative and qualitative measures that will help evaluate the project and demonstrate its effectiveness.

The primary concern with LSTA is the application of technology to improve library services. The grants are not intended for technology research and development or acquisition of technologies where standards have not been adopted. Higher priority is accorded to projects that use technologies that are both replicable and sustainable and that utilize well-established technical standards for a particular application.

LSTA is also not used to acquire, maintain, or expand technology that is an ongoing, operational local responsibility. LSTA is not intended to supplant local parent body or governing body commitment and support of the library in developing its automation program. Grant applications that request technology products and services that are normally associated with the routine, continuing internal needs of the library are accorded a low priority. This includes library automation systems, computer workstations, licensed databases, telecommunications networks, and other operating technologies unless designated as a statewide priority through a State Library targeted LSTA program.

LSTA is not normally used in ways that duplicate existing state-funded opportunities. Whenever possible, available state funds are used in preference to federal funds for ongoing programs. Under the Library of California, for example, regional library networks receive funds to establish and expand telecommunications infrastructure. Under the California Library Services Act public libraries can apply for retrospective cataloging and catalog enrichment grants.

INFORMATION:

For more information on LSTA and other grants to fund technology contact Ira Bray, (916) 653-0171, ibray@library.ca.gov, in the Library Development Services Bureau, in advance of developing a proposal.

GENERAL EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS:

Collection analysis/assessment – Applicants seeking to catalog uncataloged collections, convert

catalog records (current or retrospective), index, create finding aids, preserve, and/or digitize content of collections must furnish detailed information about the collections, including physical information such as format and number of items to be processed. Applications should address the collection's relevance to California's history, society and culture, the uniqueness of the collection, its statewide significance to resource sharing, and the library's willingness to share them.

Matching funds requirement - In addition to the collection assessment, some types of projects must reflect a match with other funds contributed by the applicant. Check the specific program invitation to see what requirements apply in each case. The match may be a fraction of, equal, or exceed the LSTA funds requested and may involve real dollars, In-kind contributions or a combination.

Continuation - Technology projects must have a strong post-grant continuation component to be competitive. Some earmarks of local commitment are matching funds, in-kind contributions, documented buy-in from a local parent organization or other funding source, and involvement of other local institutions and/or agencies.

Post-grant obligation - The library must assume long-term responsibility for maintaining, upgrading or replacing equipment, and sustaining electronic or digital resources created by the project. Equipment acquired with grant funds must continue to be used for project purposes for at least five years, or the life of the equipment.

Technical detail - Applicants must identify and describe the technology components needed to implement the project in sufficient detail so that an outside reviewer can understand what those elements are and how they will be used.

Standards - Technology applications should demonstrate that the applicant is familiar with standards and protocols that are generally associated with the type of project being proposed and that those standards have been addressed in the project's conception. (Examples of standards: US-MARC, Z39.50, TCP/IP.)

Technical Expertise - Applicants should demonstrate that they have, or can obtain, the technical expertise to implement and maintain their projects, either with in-house staff or through vendor or contract assistance.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

These are some basic concerns that applicants should bear in mind when developing technology proposals:

- What will the technology achieve?
Examples of what might be achieved: new/better/more effective systems and procedures; value added to an existing technology; maximized availability of existing resources.
- Is the proposed technology the most appropriate means for achieving the project goal?
- Is the project feasible and will it work? Is the project cost-effective?
Examples of elements to be considered: pre-planning; level of sophistication of technology; interconnectivity topology; realistic timeline; off-the-shelf and/or availability of hardware and software; track record of applicant; vendor credentials.

Examples of ways to analyze costs: cost per person served; compare alternative methods of meeting project goals and their costs.

- How will the technology be sustained and kept current? How will it migrate to future generations after the conclusion of the grant-funded period?
- Is the project replicable?
Examples: demonstration model; guidelines; handbook.
- For projects dealing with resource sharing, is the technology compatible with statewide library resource-sharing program guidelines, protocols and standards? Does it contribute to the development of The Library of California?

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF PROJECTS:

- **DIGITIZATION:** Library Development Services has announced priorities and standards for digitization projects. For information on current digitization and local history priorities and programs, refer to the separate flier on this subject included in the packet entitled “Guidelines for Developing LSTA Grant Proposals.”
- **COMPUTER TRAINING LABORATORIES:** A low priority is accorded to computer training laboratories due to the advent of the Gates Library Initiative and the computer laboratories implemented under that program and in conjunction with the InFoPeople program.
- **WEB SITES:** LSTA is not used to develop or maintain the general Web site of a library. Grant funds may be considered for special Web content such as an exhibition, a subject-specific site or page, or an innovative function or service.
- **RETROSPECTIVE CONVERSION:** Conversion of bibliographic records must show a statewide benefit and commitment to making records available for statewide use. Such projects will receive neither total funding support nor long-term maintenance under LSTA. The competitiveness of individual projects will be enhanced or diminished by the amount of matching funds/in-kind contributions identified in the proposal and application.

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